Fowl
Feathered
Review
№ 187

Issue 187: The Weeping Skies of Saturn are a Spoon: Gorillas in Top Hats, Laser Blasters in Hand: What More Do You Need?!

Fowl Feathered Review is a quarterly, a disordered artifact of the human impulse to categorize and consume the ephemeral. Produced by the Springwound Mammoth Pancake Coalition–an entity distinct from its waffle-centric counterpart–it is birthed under the Fowlpox Press imprint. Virgil Kay, its editor, presides over this enterprise from a paper canoe adrift on the Passagassawakeag, a river of dubious depth and even more dubious inhabitants. Surrounded by featherheads and their aquatic card games, Kay's reign is absolute, his word the final arbiter in the transformation of boastful souls into doormats. Layout and visual conceits are the province of Cookie Granola, while melodrama and histrionics fall under the purview of Childe Harold. Silent Bill, in his characteristically taciturn manner, provides necessary pauses. The review's structural integrity, or lack thereof, is the domain of Unkie Bob, whose talents extend to the mitigation of typographical errors and the prevention of electrical conflagrations. Everett Enótita serves as Kay's indispensable amanuensis, and the Ecum Secum Literary Brain Trust, in a gesture of dubious beneficence, offers nominal financial support. Printed upon the verdant expanse of Bald Porcupine Island, and laced with the enigmatic Kraa, a bioengineered culinary enigma, the Fowl Feathered Review remains a testament to human ingenuity, or perhaps merely a symptom of cultural decline. ISSN: 1929-7238.

"I am an observer of life, a non-participant who takes no sides. I am in the regimented society, but not of it."

--Moondog, The Viking of 6th Avenue

Return Policy:
If this magazine does not meet your expectations, please return it to us in its original condition for a full refund, minus the cost of enlightenment.

Submissions

Fowlpox Press: A Submission Guide for the Determined (or Deluded)
To the Aspiring Artist (or Sandwich Enthusiast):

1. **Craft** (or **Culinary Construct**): 2-227 poems, a numerical range that hints at both ambition and a troubling lack of self-editing, may find their way to our digital doorstep (fowlpoxpress@mail2poet.com). Alternatively, for the visually inclined, paintings numbered 2-953 (a prolific career, or perhaps a basement overflowing with forgotten canvases?) are welcome. We are also, inexplicably, open to submissions of twelve-inch sandwiches.
2. **The Gatekeeper:** Address your offerings to Virgil Kay, Editor. In posession of remarkably discerning taste, or so he believes, Virgil is a rooster of some renown, a creature of instinct and inexplicable confidence. His title, "China Wok Habitue," suggests a broader palate than one might expect from a bird, though it's more likely a testament to the local takeout joint's generous portions. (**Please note:** Include a bio, a desperate plea for recognition that will likely join the unread masses in the digital purgatory of our slush pile.)
3. **Format:** Poems, those valiant attempts at capturing the human experience in meter and rhyme, should be attached in a Word document or PDF. Paintings, windows into your soul (or a weekend spent with Bob Ross reruns), must be submitted in JPEG, TIFF, or a format our aging technology can comprehend. Jokes, if they exist, should be delivered in MP3 format. We are, alas, not equipped to handle the nuanced art of the live performance. Sandwiches, a curious offering in the realm of artistic expression, require clear plastic wrapping and a small packet of Kewpie Mayonnaise. (**Pro-tip:** The Kewpie packaging is, undeniably, a work of art in its own right, and we encourage you to admire it before consumption.)
4. **The Cycle Continues:** We exist in a perpetual state of acceptance and rejection. A Sisyphean task, some might say. We receive submissions 365 days a year, a testament to the relentless hope, or perhaps blissful ignorance, of aspiring artists. However, with a heavy heart (and a full crop), we must inform you that rejections also occur 365 days a year.
5. **The Sandwiches:** Ah, the sandwiches. These, unlike your artistic endeavors, find a permanent home within our editorial sanctum. Virgil, in his infinite wisdom, has determined that a diet rich in carbohydrates is essential for maintaining his regal demeanor.
6. **Leap Year Follies:** Leap years, those extra days gifted by the whims of the calendar, offer no reprieve. Aspiring poets, it seems, are undeterred by such temporal anomalies. You are, however, cordially invited to "take a flying leap" during these additional 24 hours.

Please proceed with caution. Artistic aspirations are a delicate dance, and the path to publication is littered with the fallen hopes of countless dreamers. But hey, maybe your sandwich is killer. Just remember, Kewpie or bust.

Fowl Feathered Review | Poets & Writers (pw.org)

"Non ignora mali, miseris succurrere disco."

— Virgil, The Aeneid

ALINDA'S DESCENT

By Julius Grover

In the architecture of betrayal
she stands—a glamazon fractured
by childhood's jagged memories
and a dog's silent grave
And here you are, lookin' at her, thinkin' maybe it's that cosmic dance, them Alinda asteroids, the 887 crew, floatin' eccentric, like they're just tryin' to dodge the taxman of gravity. Yeah, almost like she's some kinda dark princess, waltzin' with space rocks. But no, man. That ain't the gig. That ain't the picture show.
Money spills from suitcases like wounded confessions
each bill a testament to rage
each crisp edge a blade
against forgotten loyalties
Nah, this ain't stellar cartography. This is Monroe Street, Hoboken, New Jersey, a long, long time ago. She was my childhood sweetheart, pure as a bell, if bells could taste of sugar. Remember the gummy sharks? From the bodega, penny candy display, all gleaming like a treasure map. She'd worked for 'em, man, every single bottle redeemed, clinking like small victories. And then, the bullies. Always the bullies, comin' on strong like a bad dream. They'd just... take 'em. Right out her hand. And I'd be there, a small, furious knight in cheap sneakers, fightin' for those sharks, for her, givin' her my own, and then some. Funny how a mouthful of gelatin can be the start of a whole stinkin'epic.
The lonely tower rises
concrete and malevolence
a geometric wound in landscape
where enemies are summoned
not by whispers

but by the raw currency of vengeance

Course, thinkin' of her as a princess now, with the way she just kinda... evolved into a heartless, backstabbing drama queen, well, that's like trying to fit a square peg in a round hole when the peg's also on fire and the hole's yelling obscenities. Not a good idea, naturally. Some things just ain't meant to be polished.

She scratches—not eyes

but the very surface of memory

peeling back layers of hurt
like wallpaper revealing
generations of silent screams
Oh, the narratives that curl
around her fingers
like smoke from a ritual
not of healing
but of calculated
demolition
Who will speak her name
when the tower falls?
When money becomes dust
and betrayal
is just another story
told in the margins
of someone else's forgetting

From the Mind of Howie Brabham comes...

THE INEXPLICABLE BEIGE: A PLUMBING ODYSSEY OF EXISTENTIAL ADHESION

The algorithm had predicted, with an unsettling 98.7% certainty, that the precise shade of beige of the overturned teacup would ultimately lead to the unraveling of the known universe, or at least a severely delayed luncheon. But even the cold, calculating machinations of artificial intelligence could not have anticipated the sheer, unadulterated, exquisitely disastrous intervention of Arlo and Hubert, purveyors of hydrological remediation from the outer boroughs, in the domestic drama playing out at 432 Park Avenue. Their mandate, issued with the glacial gravity of a papal decree by a Mrs. Van Der Hoof whose voice could curdle cream at fifty paces, was nothing less than a full-scale family intervention disguised as a plumbing repair: a recalcitrant porcelain throne and, more insidiously, the architectural overhaul of a familial psychodrama.

Arlo, the elder, possessed a mind so labyrinthine it occasionally lost itself in its own philosophical cul-de-sacs, yet presented its findings with the unshakeable conviction of a minor prophet. He viewed the gleaming, minimalist bathroom, a sanctuary of sleek surfaces and unspoken anxieties, with the discerning eye of a seasoned architectural critic. Hubert, his younger brother, was a veritable whirlwind of unchanneled kinetic energy and unflagging optimism, whose grasp of causality was, at best, a charming

suggestion, and whose signature move involved a full-body commitment to any given task, often before the task was fully understood.

“Observe, Hubert,” Arlo began, circling the afflicted toilet with the gravitas usually reserved for unveiling a national monument, "this was not merely a hydrological obstruction; it was a semiotic rupture, a manifest symptom of deeper entropic forces at play within this domiciliary unit. The water, it appeared, was merely refusing to proceed—much like Zack on the subject of gainful employment."
Zack, a sullen teenager, emerged from his room, sporting a black hoodie and the weary air of someone who had just witnessed the birth of the universe and found it decidedly underwhelming. "It's a metaphor," he muttered, before retreating back into his fortress of solitude.

Hubert, already unwinding a generous length of industrial-grade plumber's tape, nodded vigorously. “Right, Arlo! The water had stage fright, huh? We had to give it a little nudge, a pep talk for the pipes, like when Penelope wouldn't go to that debutante ball!"
Penelope, the dramatic daughter, flounced into the bathroom, trailing a silk scarf and an air of theatrical despair. "My spirit is a barren wasteland, gentlemen! Much like this apartment's WiFi signal! Can you weld a connection to meaning? To authenticity?"

"Precisely," Arlo affirmed, oblivious to Hubert's literalism. "The objective, then, was to re-establish the fluidic dialogue between the present moment and the inevitable future, symbolically mending the fissures in the family's communicative nexus."
With Flaubertian precision, Hubert proceeded to utilize the aforementioned plumber's tape not on the pipe, but to meticulously wrap the entire porcelain bowl, as if bandaging a wounded, oversized mollusk. "There," he declared, patting the now-mummified commode. "Nobody's talking past this now! It's all snug, like a bug in a rug, only a toilet in a tape!"

A faint, melancholic aroma of industrial adhesive, redolent of forgotten municipal infrastructure and the quiet desperation of a thousand leaky faucets, wafted through the rarefied air. Arlo blinked. "My esteemed colleague, whilst your hypothesis regarding the tensile strength of this adhesive was undoubtedly sound in a purely theoretical

framework, its practical application in the securing of this precariously balanced agglomeration of porcelain appeared, shall we say, sub-optimal for the intended hydrological recalibration."

Just then, Mrs. Van Der Hoof swept in, her silk robe billowing. "Were we done with this aquatic farce, gentlemen? Zack was refusing to leave his room until the 'toxic paternal residue' was expunged from the air conditioning ducts!"
"Ah, the ducts!" Arlo seized the new directive with alacrity. "A classic conduit of latent hostility! Hubert, fetch the welding equipment! We had to forge new pathways, new emotional alloys, within the domestic ventilation system!"

Hubert, ever the enthusiastic implementer, reappeared dragging a heavy welding rig. “Gonna melt away that toxic residue, huh, Arlo? Like melting lead into gold, only, you know, for feelings!"

"The winds of fortune," Arlo mused, adjusting his safety goggles, "like a runaway wheelbarrow full of existential dread, had once again deposited us at the precipice of utter discombobulation, hadn't they, old bean? Just like a rolling stone, only stickier. We had to approach this with the nuanced understanding of a jazz musician soloing on the thermodynamics of familial discord."

They ventured to Zack's door, a heavy oak edifice, which Arlo declared a "metaphorical barrier to psychosocial permeability."

"How did we weld that, Arlo?" Hubert asked, eyeing the door suspiciously.

"Not the door itself, Hubert," Arlo explained, "but the very concept of its closure! We would weld the open spaces, the conversational lacunae! We would forge an unbreakable bond of unconditional presence!"

With a contrarian logic that only made sense to him, Hubert decided the best way to "welden spaces" was to create new ones. He began meticulously welding a tiny, intricate lattice of metal over the existing grates of the air conditioning vent, humming. Sparks

flew. The vent, instead of becoming a conduit for positive familial flow, was rapidly becoming a highly ornate, extremely un-functional thermal prison.

"Dig it, man," Hubert muttered, squinting through his mask. "This commode and these ducts were putting out some serious bad vibes, like a square cat trying to scat a bebop solo, just ain't groovin'. But we were laying down the righteous beat, gonna get this whole scene swinging, see?"

Penelope materialized again, this time with a wilting rose. "My soul is a barren landscape, gentlemen, much like this apartment's WiFi signal! Can you weld a connection to meaning? To authenticity?"

Arlo considered. "Indeed, young Penelope. We would employ the ancient art of brazing to mend the frayed edges of the collective unconscious, perhaps beginning with the chandelier. Its light, currently diffused, must be focused, much like one's existential purpose."

Hubert, misunderstanding yet again, began to meticulously wrap plumber's tape around the individual crystals of the massive chandelier in the living room, humming a tune about freedom. Each sticky tendril, glimmering under the opulent lighting, became a poignant reminder of their initial, perhaps hubristic, optimism.

"This endeavor, my dear chap," Arlo remarked to the now tape-bedecked Hubert, "had gone from a minor kerfuffle to a full-blown brouhaha. Indeed, one might even venture to call it a... catastrophe-adjacent situation."

"Like a trombone solo in a hurricane," Penelope added with a dramatic flourish. "Each misplaced weld, each errant application of plumber's tape, a testament to the hollowness of modern existence."

"But the beauty, Hubert, was in the process, in the striving for the ideal, even if the ideal manifested as a porcelain sarcophagus and a candelabra in bondage," Arlo finished.
Zack, emerging long enough to survey their handiwork, simply sighed, "Just...wow."

Mrs. Van Der Hoof, surprisingly, merely sighed, then handed them a check. By the time the sun began to set, the penthouse at 432 Park Avenue was a testament to their unique philosophy of remediation. The toilet was a plumber's-tape mummy. The air conditioning vents were miniature, abstract sculptures of welded metal. The chandelier sparkled with new, adhesive facets. Zack remained locked in his room, now complaining of "welding fume residue." Penelope dramatically declared the "new artistic installations" to be "deeply resonant with the hollowness of modern existence," her wilting rose having been artfully taped to a banister.

"Well, Arlo," Hubert beamed, wiping grime from his brow with the back of a gloved hand, "I'd say we truly hammered out the kinks in the cosmic karma, wouldn't you? A real triumph of spirit over... well, over plumbing."

Arlo, gazing at the adhesive-encrusted chandelier, nodded sagely. "Indeed, Hubert. We had not merely repaired; we had re-envisioned. We had transformed the mundane into the magnificent, the functional into the fantastically philosophical. This domicile now stood as a monument to the indomitable human will, albeit one that might require a considerable amount of industrial solvent to truly appreciate its deeper meaning." He paused, a glint in his eye. "Tell me, Hubert, had you ever considered the inherent structural integrity of a grand piano when subjected to controlled explosive demolition?" Hubert's eyes widened with unbridled enthusiasm. "Ooh, no! But I bet we could really get it to sing!"

The Hydrological-Acoustic Catharsis: A Post-Mortem Report

The following day, Arlo and Hubert embarked upon their most ambitious undertaking yet: the "**Hydrological-Acoustic Catharsis.**" This project, as documented in Mrs. Van Der Hoof's increasingly bewildered diary entries, unfolded with an almost liturgical

precision, albeit a liturgy penned by a pair of ecstatic, industrial-grade performance artists.

Data of the Experiment:

- **Window Alterations:**
  - **East-Facing Windows (Central Park View):** Three circular holes were cut, each precisely 36 inches (3 feet) in diameter. The glass, thick and resistant, offered momentary protest before succumbing to the diamond-tipped saws and the percussive insistence of Hubert's mallet. The edges, though jagged at first, were quickly smoothed by Arlo's insistence on "aesthetic integrity in discombobulation."
  - **South-Facing Windows (City View):** Two additional holes were carved, each 24 inches (2 feet) in diameter, with similar precision. The act of cutting was accompanied by the sound of glass dust settling like fine, expensive snow onto the plush, cream-colored carpeting.
- **Hydrological Apparatus:**
  - **Hose Quantity:** Three industrial-grade hoses.
  - **Hose Diameter:** Each hose measured 12 inches (1 foot) in diameter. Their robust, woven exteriors, stained with the grime of countless previous "remediations," contrasted sharply with the pristine white walls of the penthouse.
  - **Water Source:** The mummified porcelain commode in the master bathroom, now re-plumbed with a series of high-pressure pumps. The sound of the pumps, a low, guttural thrum, vibrated through the floorboards.
  - **Water Trajectory & Reach:** Each jet of water erupted from its respective window, propelled by a force that made the hoses stiffen like petrified snakes. The water, a shimmering, arcing phenomenon, soared outwards, achieving a horizontal throw of approximately **150 feet (45.7 meters)**. This created three distinct, ephemeral rainbows in the mid-morning sun, each prism of light a fleeting testament to their unconventional genius.
  - **Impact Zone:** The water descended onto **Park Avenue**, creating three distinct, rapidly expanding puddles that coalesced into a veritable river from

East 55th Street to East 59th Street. The asphalt, usually stoic and unyielding, glistened with the unlooked-for baptism. Pedestrians scattered like startled pigeons, their initial annoyance quickly giving way to a shared, bewildered laughter. Taxicabs, their yellow hides suddenly streaked with moisture, honked in a chorus of confused protest and admiration.

- **Acoustic Apparatus:**
  - **Speaker Quantity:** Two large, weather-resistant Bluetooth speakers. Their sleek, black casings stood in stark, almost menacing, contrast to the delicate lace curtains that still clung stubbornly to the remaining window frames.
  - **Sound Source:** A digital collection of 19th-century Alpine folk songs, chosen by Hubert for their "unadulterated emotional purity" and "capacity for transcending linguistic barriers."
  - **Volume Level:** Calibrated to "concert-level volumes," confirmed by Mrs. Van Der Hoof's subsequent phone calls to the precinct, which cataloged the sound as "unidentifiable high-pitched vocalizations of an extreme and disruptive nature."
  - **Audible Radius:** The yodeling, a soaring, warbling cry, carried with surprising clarity for blocks. It was distinctly audible as far west as **Fifth Avenue**, where a doorman at a prestigious Fifth Avenue co-op was observed adjusting his tie with an air of profound existential weariness. To the east, the sound reached **Lexington Avenue**, interrupting a high-powered business lunch, causing a CEO to choke on his artisanal salad. And occasionally, when the wind shifted just so, the faintest, ghostly echo of a yodel could be perceived bouncing off the glass towers of **Midtown East**, a bizarre, uninvited serenade to the titans of finance.

The morning of the Hydrological-Acoustic Catharsis dawned with a pale, hopeful light, quite oblivious to the impending torrents and warbles. The air, usually thick with the murmur of early morning traffic and the distant, polite chatter of sidewalk cafés, was soon pierced by the shriek of sawing glass. It was a sound that made one's teeth ache, a sound of irreversible change.

When the first jet of water erupted, it did so with a magnificent, almost defiant roar, a white plume against the backdrop of the city's steely sky. The spray, catching the nascent sun, glittered like a million scattered diamonds, each droplet a tiny, fleeting mirror of the grand disarray. A passing dog walker on Park Avenue, a meticulously groomed poodle at his side, stopped mid-stride, his jaw slack. The poodle, unaccustomed to such aquatic surprises, let out a small, offended yelp, its usually proud tail drooping like a wilting flower. The water, as it struck the pavement, created a series of perfectly round, ever-expanding ripples, each one a fleeting diagram of chaos. One could almost feel the collective intake of breath from the street below, a ripple of astonishment that spread through the morning commuters like a cool, unexpected breeze.

And then, the yodeling. It began softly at first, a tentative, almost shy "yodel-ay-hee-hoo!" that seemed to test the very air. But then, Hubert, encouraged by Arlo's beatific smile, turned up the volume, and the sound swelled, blooming into a full, resonant, utterly un-New York yowl. It was a sound that bypassed the ear and went straight to the bewildered soul, a sonic anomaly in the urban tapestry.

In the **Upper East Side**, the initial reaction was a delicate symphony of shock. A woman walking her teacup chihuahua, its tiny legs barely touching the ground, actually flinched, her perfectly coiffed hair momentarily ruffled by the unexpected acoustic blast. The scent of damp cashmere mingled with the faint, unsettling smell of urban plumbing. At the meticulously arranged outdoor seating of a high-end bakery, a group of women discussing their upcoming charity gala paused, forks laden with artisanal pastries hovering mid-air, their expressions a study in refined confusion. One, a woman whose pearls seemed to vibrate with indignation, was overheard to murmur, "My dear, I do believe someone has misplaced their Alps." Yet, a flicker of something new began. A young artist, sketching on a park bench, put down his charcoal, a slow, delighted smile spreading across his face. He began to hum along, off-key, the yodeling sparking a nascent idea for a piece incorporating "found urban soundscapes and the inherent absurdity of existence."

Further north, in **Harlem**, the yodeling, though distant, filtered through the open windows of brownstones and the chatter of early morning stoop life. It was a peculiar,

almost whimsical interruption. A group of older men playing dominoes on a card table paused their game, their faces crinkled in bemusement. One, a man named Curtis whose laugh rumbled like a bass drum, slapped his thigh. "Lord, listen to that! Somebody up there trying to call the cows home, but they done lost their way to the Bronx!" Children, already brimming with the effervescent energy of a summer morning, picked up the refrain, their high-pitched "yodels" echoing through the streets, transforming the alien sound into a playful, communal chant. It was not a sound of invasion, but of curious integration, another strange note in the grand, improvisational jazz of the city.

In **The Bronx**, the sound was a ghost, a whisper on the wind, almost indistinguishable from the distant wail of an ambulance or the rumble of a passing train. It was less a direct assault and more a subliminal suggestion of strangeness. A taxi driver, stuck in traffic on the Grand Concourse, frowned, adjusting his radio dial. "What in the world is that?" he muttered to himself, convinced his stereo was malfunctioning. But for some, particularly those who worked the late shift and were just returning home, the faint, repetitive sound took on a dreamlike quality, a strange, half-heard lullaby from another dimension.

Queens, with its mosaic of cultures, absorbed the yodeling into its already cacophonous embrace. In Astoria, a Greek grandmother, hanging laundry on her fire escape, paused, a clothespin poised. She shrugged, a gesture of ancient resilience, and continued her task, perhaps simply adding "unexplained yodeling" to the long list of inexplicable New York phenomena. In Flushing, a Chinese restaurant owner, meticulously arranging his dim sum, raised an eyebrow. "Sounds like... a very enthusiastic bird," he mused, before returning to his dumplings, the yodeling merely a fleeting, odd punctuation mark in the symphony of sizzling woks and conversational chatter. It was a sound that, like so many things in Queens, simply was, existing without demanding immediate comprehension, woven into the city's vast, indifferent hum.

As for **Brooklyn**, the yodeling was a beacon, a clarion call to the creatively inclined. In Williamsburg, a young woman with purple hair and a nose ring instantly Instagrammed a video of the distant water jets and the faint, high-pitched wail, captioning it: "NYC's new avant-garde plumbing installation. Deeply resonant with the inherent liquidity of emotional repression." Within hours, a "Yodel-Inspired Poetry Slam" was announced for

that evening at a local coffee shop. In Greenpoint, a band that specialized in experimental folk punk began brainstorming a new song, "The Ballad of the Park Avenue Yodelers," incorporating distorted yodel samples and the sound of dripping water. For them, it was not merely noise, but raw material, a sudden, glorious gift from the universe.

As the sun began its descent, casting long, orange shadows across the newly baptized Park Avenue, Arlo and Hubert stood silhouetted against the gaping holes in Mrs. Van Der Hoof's penthouse windows. The jets of water still flowed, albeit with slightly less vigor, and the yodeling, though hoarse, continued its plaintive, triumphant cry. The city, in its vast, indifferent, and occasionally whimsical way, had absorbed their "remediation." The grand experiment had unfolded, a testament to two men's singular vision, and the baffling, resilient capacity of a metropolis to incorporate even the most inexplicable beige.

A BRONX BEAT WITH A BENT JIVE

Attributed to ONESIPHORUS DANKWORTH,

Window Washer

The sun, see,
she's a gilded gal,
spillin' that morning molass'
on the Manhattan masonry.

And yours truly, Onesiphorus,
atop this scaffolding,
a high-rise philosopher
with a squeegee for a scepter,
ain't just spiffing up glass, no sir.

I'm eyeballin' the world,
a regular ink-stained beetle
on a twenty-story perch,
watchin' the human beans below

scurry like ants
with their troubles and their triumphs,
ya dig?

But my gaze,
it ain't always caught by the hustle,
the rumble of the elevated,
or the far-off wail of a lonely sax.
Nah.

My peepers, they swing,
like a hot lick on a trumpet,
to that window yonder,
where the beautiful lady next door resides.

She's got a smile
that could melt the ice off a gin mill
in January,
a real swell cat,
but her feet, fella,
her poor footsies...
Oy vey!

They're a regular Fleischer cartoon of sorrow,
those toes of hers,
clamped over each other like bent nails,
see?

Rheumatoid, they call it,
a real schmuck of a condition
that steals the spring
from a dame's step,
turns a walk into a stagger.

And it just ain't right,
a rhythm like that silenced,
a potential dance partner grounded.
My heart,
it gives a little "ker-plunk!"
every time I see her,
knowin' the jig she can't quite do.

Now, I ain't no mook
with mad stacks of dough,
just a humble window washer,
a fella who knows
the shine and the grime
of this big ol' town.

But these tips, Mac,
these hard-earned nickels and dimes,
they pile up
like secrets in a forgotten jazz club.

And I've been thinkin',
deep thoughts from a dusty ledge,
how I'd love to take that pile,
every last copper and greenback,
and dedicate it, natch,
to gettin' those forefoot reconstructions for her.

Yeah, a proper fix-up, top-drawer,
no cheap hooch operation.

Just one little request, see,
from this humble hep cat.

I gotta get me some nice pictures,
candid snaps of the whole shebang –
before, during, after.

Not for no lurid reason, god forbid,
but to hold onto,
a little visual souvenir
of a good deed done,
and a dream sparked.

Because a man's gotta dream, ain't he?

And the dream,
it's a vision,
a sweet mirage
in the heat shimmer of a New York summer.

It's us, see,
dancin' at the SummerStage concert,
under the benevolent gaze of the urban sky.

That green monkey costumed one-man band
will be there, no doubt,
blowin' his blues with a beat,
stompin' out a rhythm
that makes even the lampposts wanna Lindy.

And she, my beautiful neighbor,
will be there too,
her new feet a-tappin', a-shufflin', a-glidin',
light as a feather,
not a single bent nail in sight.

We'll cut a rug, you and I,
a regular swell cat and keen doll
on the dance floor,
showing this city
a thing or two about joy.

Yeah, a madcap jig,
under the moonlight,
with a little help
from a window washer's tips.

Dig it?

Chronicles of the Quantized Absurd: A Hyper-Aesthetic Disquisition on Authority, Ontology, and the Sticky Entropy of Existence

By Anahita Van Der Velde

The perpetually unfolding panorama of the New York City skyline, a brutalist symphony of glass and steel, often distracts from the quiet, contained dramas unfolding within its meticulously gridded embrace. Yet, nestled within the Upper East Side, behind the discreet limestone facade of The Spence School at 22 East 91st Street, a different kind of architectural marvel is being tested—the very edifice of societal norms and the pliable nature of reality itself. Here, in the hallowed, often hushed halls of an institution that prides itself on cultivating young minds, two particular minds are cultivating something altogether more... chaotic. These are the logged observations, presented with a detached fascination and a weary admiration, of their ongoing, exquisitely styled deconstruction of the mundane.

LOG ENTRY 01: ON AUTHORITY AND TAXONOMY

Location: Office of Principal Smythe.
Atmosphere: Mahogany, suppressed disappointment, tweed.
Objective: The presentation of a hypothesis.

One begins with the pencils. They sit in a grooved wooden tray, a phalanx of perfect points. Hexagonal, graphite-cored, yellow-lacquered. They do not recline; they hold a position. They are instruments less of inscription and more of bureaucratic judgment. A silent, geometric tribunal.

It is into this sterile field of order that Zahra introduces a variable. She leans, a chartreuse feather boa cascading over the desk's edge like a slow, glamorous chemical spill. One notes the slight tremor in its filaments, registering the room's otherwise imperceptible air currents. Her oversized, avant-garde sunglasses, perhaps a custom piece from a Dries Van Noten collection, reflect the muted light of the office, obscuring any direct read of her intentions, while her impeccably tailored, shimmering emerald suit, a bespoke creation from Savile Row's Huntsman & Sons, seems almost an act of defiance against the drab surroundings. The faint, yet distinct, aroma of Byredo's Bal d'Afrique lingers in her wake.

"We have a theory," she announces. The annunciation is not aimed at the principal, but at the situation itself. It is a field report delivered from within the experiment. "That you are a twink who's fallen on hard times."

A chasm of silence opens. It is a profound, almost spiritual quiet, the kind one finds in deep space or immediately following a catastrophic server error. Principal Smythe's face, a document written in faint, worried lines, attempts to parse the statement. He is a man confronted not with a transgression, but with an incomprehensible classification. The agony is palpable. It is the quiet torment of a soul being sorted into a filing cabinet it did not know existed.

“Yeah, like,” Lieke adds, providing what one might term supporting data, her heavily distressed designer jeans from Vetements and a vintage band t-shirt, likely procured from a well-curated vintage store in Brooklyn's Bushwick, a study in carefully curated rebellion. Her chunky, platform combat boots, undoubtedly Dr. Martens, thump softly against the carpet as she shifts her weight. "The way you meticulously arrange your pencils? It’s, like, totally twink energy.”

The principal’s mouth opens and closes. A biological function devoid of linguistic output. He is experiencing a system crash. To an outside observer, this might appear comical. To be inside the moment is to witness a man’s entire operational reality flicker.
Zahra straightens, assuming the posture of a documentarian. “It’s just a hypothesis,” she clarifies, as if to a skeptical funding committee. “We’re observing the microaggressions of authority figures in a controlled environment.”[1]

Detention is issued. A predictable outcome, the system resetting to its default state of banal punishment. It is, in its own way, a relief.

As they exit, the next phase is proposed. A vlog. ‘Principal Smythe: Twink or Tyrant?’ The question is, of course, a false dichotomy. But one must admire the commitment to the bit. The planned inclusion of matching bedazzled Crocs suggests the project is moving from simple social commentary to a more ambitious form of aesthetic terrorism.

One notes, with a detached fascination, the almost imperceptible bulge in Lieke’s back pocket. Principal Smythe’s wallet, one presumes. A new variable introduced into the experiment, unannounced. A subtle re-calibration of the terms of engagement.

One logs this with a certain weariness. The universe continues to present phenomena that are both spiritually exhausting and impossible to look away from.

[1] An environment, one must note, that is only "controlled" in the sense that a fire in a wastepaper basket is a "controlled" burn.

LOG ENTRY 02: ON THEOLOGY AND SENTIENT BEVERAGES

Location: Confessional Booth, St. Jude's.
Atmosphere: Old wood, desperation, mothballs.
Objective: The cataloging of a novel form of sin.

The architecture is designed for obfuscation. A wooden box for whispering shameful truths through a grille. A low-bandwidth interface for transmitting spiritual data. Lieke initiates the protocol. She is dressed in an almost theatrical solemnity today: a long, flowing black velvet dress, likely from an ethical, independent designer found at Dover Street Market, that whispers across the floor and a heavy silver crucifix resting against her sternum, an ironically traditional counterpoint to her usual attire. The faint scent of Le Labo's Santal 33, a popular and rather ubiquitous fragrance, seems strangely out of place in this sacred space. This particular confessional is located at St. Jude's Catholic Church on 315 West 93rd Street.

"Bless me, Father, for I have sinned." A pause. "It has been approximately... two hours since my last sin." The precision is admirable. A commitment to accurate logging.

The subject of the confession is then introduced. It is not one of the standard, committee-approved sins—envy, gluttony, spray-painting a "No Skateboarding" sign. It is a transgression of a higher, more abstract order.

"I've been having these, like, really intense thoughts about The Kool-Aid Guy," she states into the darkness.

One must pause here to appreciate the sheer audacity of the proposition. The priest, a man whose entire operational framework is built upon two millennia of established doctrine concerning angels, demons, and the failings of human flesh, is now being asked to theologically situate an anthropomorphic pitcher of high-fructose corn syrup.

“I think he’s, like, a total thirst trap,” Lieke continues, her voice a conspiratorial whisper. “The way he, like, bursts through walls? It’s, like, totally hot.”

Behind the grille, a rustling sound. The sound of a man’s certainty being violently shaken. It is the sound of Dostoevsky’s Grand Inquisitor being asked for his opinion on a cartoon. What is free will in the face of such raw, destructive, and presumably flavorful charisma?

The Kool-Aid Guy offers no complex moral choices. He simply offers oblivion, one brick wall at a time. Oh, yeah.

“Also, Father,” Lieke adds, her voice dropping to an even lower conspiratorial tone, “I, like, totally pickpocketed Principal Smythe yesterday. And, like, you too just now. Do most priests carry Trojans?”

The priest, struggling to regain control of the narrative, sputters something about “spiritually appropriate thoughts” and “confessional sanctity.” It is a losing battle. The mundane evil of men has been supplanted by the Dionysian chaos of a sentient jug, and now, the inconvenient truth of a purloined wallet.

Lieke exits the booth into the unforgiving light. Zahra awaits the mission debrief.

“Let’s just say,” Lieke reports with the calm of an astronaut reporting a hull breach, “I might’ve been excommunicated. And I have some new data for our 'Principal Smythe: Twink or Tyrant?' analysis.”

The status is noted. Excommunication pending. But, as she correctly assesses, it was likely worth it for the memes. The data, after all, is the data.

LOG ENTRY 03: ON TEMPORAL MECHANICS AND STICKY ASPIRATIONS

Location: The Kitchen Floor.
Atmosphere: Linoleum, ambition, burnt sugar.
Objective: To achieve temporal displacement via a thimble-based apparatus. And to fail spectacularly.

The hypothesis, as articulated by Zahra, is that the "harmonic resonance" of antique thimbles can create a focal point of "chronal energy." The language is a magpie's nest of scientific jargon and pure, unadulterated vibes. Lieke concurs, referencing "interdimensional oscillation." Marmalade jars, filled with what one assumes is scientifically-sanctioned marmalade, are positioned as "stabilizing temporal anchors."

The initial setup proceeds with a degree of competence that is, frankly, alarming.

The anomaly occurs when Zahra, in a moment of what she later calls "inspired improvisation," introduces a non-regulation variable: a jar of artisanal blueberry jam.[2]

"The anthocyanins will, like, boost the temporal conductivity," she chirps.

The result is not temporal conductivity. The result is a viscous cascade of treacle, imbued with the faint, melancholic aroma of burnt sugar, unfurling across the pristine linoleum. It is a testament to shattered aspirations. A slow-motion ballet of failure.

A brief, fragmented exchange is logged from the heart of the burgeoning chaos:
ZAHRA: The winds of fortune, like a runaway wheelbarrow full of existential dread...
LIEKE: ...have once again deposited us at the precipice of utter discombobulation.
ZAHRA: A minor kerfuffle has escalated into a full-blown brouhaha.
LIEKE: Therefore, I propose we launch this watermelon at the precise moment of structural failure.

The logic is unsound, but the commitment is total. The watermelon is launched. Its primary effect is to introduce a significant amount of watermelon pulp into the burgeoning chaos. The endeavor has now achieved a state one might term a "catastrophe-adjacent situation."

They survey the ruins. The floor is a sticky monument to their shared, erudite numbskullery. A thimble is affixed to Zahra's forehead like a primitive cybernetic implant.

"But the aesthetic," Lieke murmurs, admiring the way the light glints off a jam-coated thimble. "It's giving 'abstract expressionism meets breakfast explosion.'"
There is no remorse. There is no learning. There is only a mutual, almost fond acceptance of the glorious mess. The enjoyment stems not from the outcome, but from the process.

A new proposal is already being logged. An unsanctioned opera performance in a supermarket aisle. The self-checkout is to be rigged to sing 'Nessun Dorma' upon scanning a bag of kale. Organically sourced, of course.

One watches them, these strange pilgrims of the absurd. They are not striving for heaven or fearing hell. They are simply testing the structural integrity of reality, one bedazzled Croc at a time. The mission, it seems, is perpetual.

[2] It cannot be stressed enough that the protocol explicitly called for citrus-based preserves. The introduction of a berry derivative represents a catastrophic breach of scientific rigor.

From Within

By Locust Storm

In the desert of the real, where saguaros weep
blood-red dirges, a chasm opens.
Not of rock, but flesh, or what was flesh,
now a maw, cactus-green, spiked,
a wound in the landscape.
Inside, the inferno,
a molten throat,
and from its depths,
a foot.
Bare,
primeval,
toes splayed,
gritty with the earth's memory.
It emerges, or recedes,
a dream logic of horror and beauty,
Man Ray's shadow plays
on Pound's stark lines.
Splatter.
Crimson on the parched ground.
A testament to what was,
what is,
what bleeds.
Fragments of paper, scattered,
dispatches from a mind unhinged,
gonzo bulletins from the psyche's edge.
No rhymes here, no neat iambs,
only the jagged rhythm of a heart
beating against barbed skin,
the visceral shock of green and red,

the foot,
a forgotten offering,
or a new genesis,
from the belly of the beast-plant.
The air hums with unspoken narratives,
a desert wind whispering
of sacrifice and emergence,
under a sky indifferent,
yet spattered with echoes of the same.

JOY BUZZER

Shake hands and watch your friend jump 6 feet high. Completely harmless.

No. 7005 _____ 50¢

ЛГАРИЯ

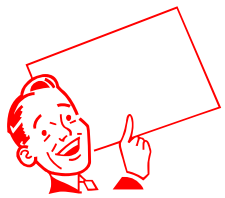
Of Sundered Suns and Bulgarian Shadows

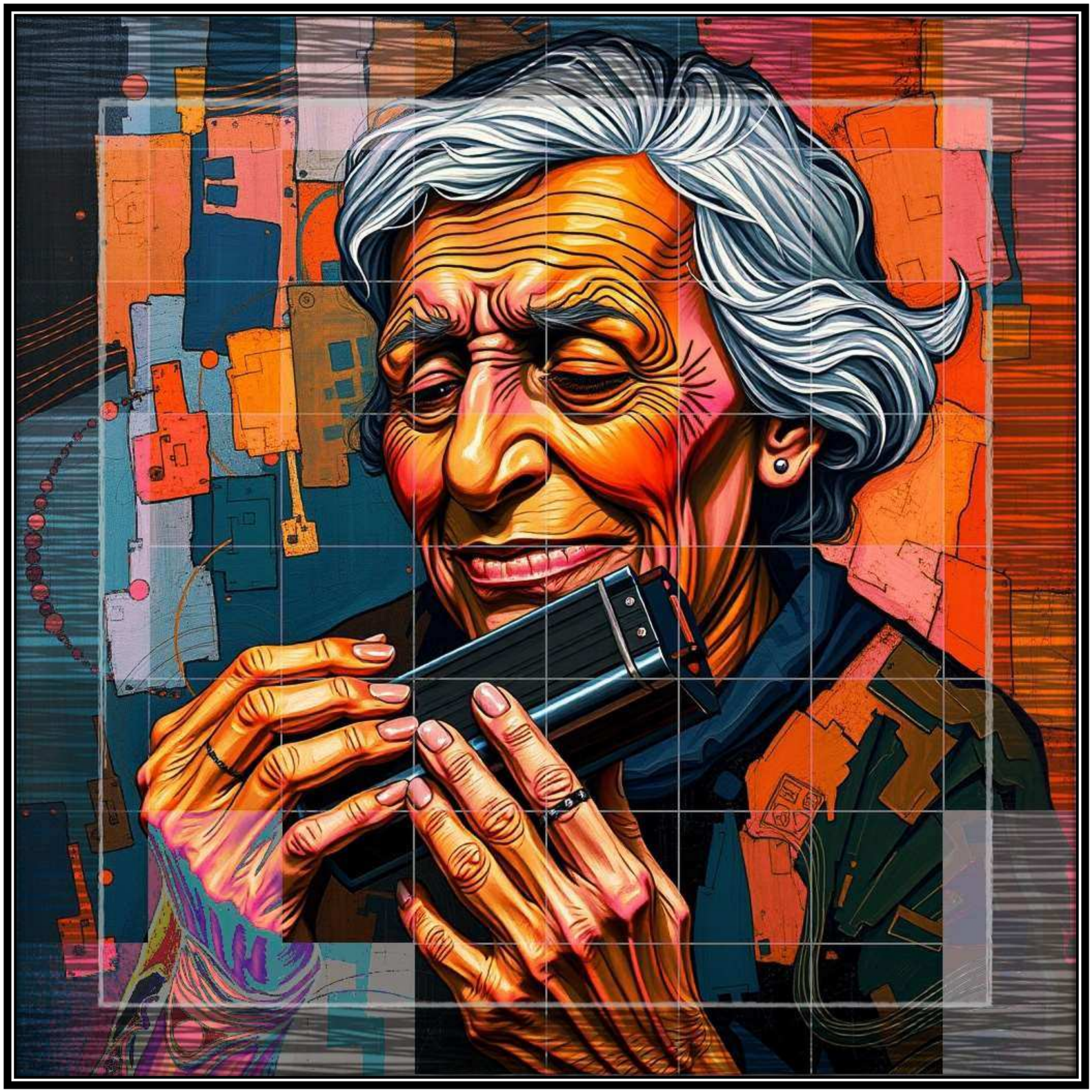
By Nikolay Krastyo Chavdarov

The coin, if coin it truly were,
a twelve-sided shudder of red and black,
a kaleidoscope spun from the fevered dream
of a thousand suns with human faces,
some grim, some grinning a knowing rictus,
faces caught in the web of an electric loom,
threads of white and sudden, startling blue,
a geometry of psychic fragmentation
laid precisely, with the meticulous madness
of a watchmaker toiling on the edge of the abyss,
upon the ochre silence of a vintage postcard.
Not Russian, no, though the script
might trick the hurried eye, but Bulgarian,
from a time when empires crumbled and new lines
were drawn on maps with the ink of blood and longing.
„БЪЛГАРИЯ„ (BULGARIA)
„ПОЩЕНСКА КАРТА„ (POSTCARD) it declares, a humble truth
amidst the vibrant chaos of the medallion.
And the stamp, a profile solemn and severe,
„5 СТОТИНКИ„ (5 STOTINKI), a ghost of commerce,
cancelled by a circle of „НИШ„ (NISH) -
Nish, a city, a crossroad, a whisper
of Ottoman past, a Balkan present.

The hand that wrote „Д-ръ Марко Павловъ„ (Dr. Marko Pavlov),
with its flourish and its dignity,
a doctor, perhaps, or a scholar of forgotten lore,
addressing „г-жа Елена Павлова„ (Mrs. Elena Pavlova),
„Сливенъ„ (Sliven), „Драгойчева 51„ (Dragoycheva 51),
a street, a door, a life unfolding
in the quiet hum of domesticity
against the backdrop of a continent
rearranging its very bones.
And over this tableau, the medallion hovers,
a twelve-sided eye,
or perhaps a benign, if unsettling, mandala,
each sun-face a tiny portal
to a memory half-recalled, a sensation
on the tip of the tongue, the taste of wormwood
and the murmur of a forgotten dance,
the scent of coal smoke and damp earth.
The lines of the postmark, faint circles,
the crisp edges of the stamp,
they anchor the dream, give gravity
to the weightless dance of the sun-faces.
It is as if the postcard itself,
a vessel of communication across time,
has become a canvas for revelation,
a cosmic inkblot test,
where the mundane meets the mystic,
and the everyday unfolds into the infinite,

a sudden, startling glimpse
into the heart of a forgotten moment,
made vibrant and eternal by the collision
of the ordinary and the utterly,
unapologetically,
and wonderfully
bizarre.





EVERYTHING, ALL AT ONCE

By Pinkas May

You could draw on that old Hohner Marine Band 12-hole mouth harp there on the lowest notes, draw hard and let it sort of snap into a twang, a rumble of a note cut short as though struck with an arrow which vibrated over its untimely death. Yeah, it said many things, things no fancy fevered blues solo, all technique-laden implication, could even come close to. It pulled the Penobscot right in, a deep, dark current, then threw it forward, spilling water over the cliffs onto unsuspecting motorists, a sudden deluge. The sun jiggled in the sky, a loose tooth, and the clouds, like fat, satisfied cats, paused before continuing their leisurely promenade across the vast, indifferent blue. That's what the mouth harp did, even though the plates were rusted, a sickly orange, and held together at one end with electrical tape, black and sticky like a forgotten sin.

Rabbit Punch played that mouth harp real well, some said despite having only six teeth in her head, others swore it was because of it, the missing gaps letting the air cut through just right, a raw, untamed edge. But mostly, it served as a good alarm, a first crack of stupid, before the rooster, that feathered show-off, got all excited and told the world what he thought of it. Rabbit got her name, whispered in the back alleys of Old Town, from giving the thugs who wanted to hold up the corner store a surprise sock to the head from behind, a quick, precise blow, like a jazz drummer's rim shot. She wasn't violent, not truly. She just hated guns, those cold, soulless pieces of metal. She'd put that harp in her fist, its battered metal a makeshift brass knuckle, and let it fly, a silent, whistling arc of justice. She said after losing a few teeth to a couple of crooks, she wasn't much afraid of those guys anymore. She knew them, you see, from school and juvenile detention and prison and the like because she was a warden before a concussion, a dizzying, bell-ringing blow at the hand of two rioting inmates, forced her into early retirement. So she lived off disability, a thin thread, in the weirdest apartment building you ever did see. The second story popped four feet over the first from four sides like a

huge lug nut, all angles and defiance, with a catwalk on one of the four sides that hung precarious, daring you to cross. None of the windows matched in size or shape, a visual cacophony, and the roof, man, the roof was a study in architectural contradictions, a patchwork quilt of mismatched ambition. Everything was dressed up in beige vinyl, like a bad dream in a cheap suit. Rabbit Punch lived on the top floor, a single room, a microwave humming its low, lonely song, a cot bed that offered little comfort, and no TV except whatever she could get on her phone when she had data, when the signal deigned to visit, and no wifi, just one bare lightbulb swinging, a sad, solitary star. It was hot in the summer, the air thick and still, and cold at night, the chill seeping in through the thin walls.

One sweltering afternoon, the kind where the asphalt shimmered like a mirage, Rabbit was out on the prowl, not for trouble, just for something to break the monotony, something to put a skip in her step, a swing in her gait. She rounded the corner by the old church, the one with the cracked bell that never rang true, and there it was, sitting on the curb by a "Free" sign, a cardboard bin overflowing with vinyl, a treasure chest of forgotten sounds. And nestled amongst the dusty grooves, a record player, a relic from another era, its needle poised like a ready musician. Her heart, usually a steady, unyielding beat, quickened its tempo, a sudden burst of Klezmer freilach, a joyous, unexpected turn. She scooped it all up, the records warm beneath her fingers, a promise whispered from the past, and hauled them back to her lug-nut kingdom, the weight a sweet burden.
She set up the player, a ritual of anticipation, and dropped the needle, a hiss and pop before the music rose, a slow, mournful Cajun waltz, a fiddle weeping secrets of the bayou. She pulled out her battered Hohner, that six-toothed wonder, and let it keen along, a raw, untamed echo. Then came a record that swung with the insistent pulse of Tejano polka, the accordion pushing and pulling like a lover's breath, and her harp, it joined in, finding the rhythm, a new voice in an old dance. Another record brought the deep, resonant thrum of Native American drums, a heartbeat of the earth, ancient and profound, and her harp found its own space, a haunting counterpoint, a quiet prayer.

It was a few days later, the air still thick with summer's stubborn humidity, when a knock came at her door, a hesitant rap that almost got lost in the hum of the microwave. It was

Old Man Hemlock, her downstairs neighbor, a quiet sort who smelled of pipe tobacco and old books. He stood there, a slight stoop to his shoulders, holding a small, worn case. "Heard you got yourself a record player, Rabbit," he mumbled, his voice raspy like dry leaves. "And that little mouth organ of yours... sounds good, real good. But a fella needs options." He opened the case, revealing not one, but seven harmonicas, glinting softly in the dim light of the hallway, each in a different key. "Found 'em in an old attic clean-out. Free, just like your records."

Rabbit Punch stared, her eyes, usually sharp and discerning, wide with something akin to wonder. Seven harps. Seven keys. It wasn't just a gift; it was a revelation, an opening, a sudden rush of jazz improvisation hitting her soul. This wasn't just about playing along anymore. This was about speaking about crafting full sentences, paragraphs, entire books of sound.

And so, the music in Rabbit's strange, beige apartment began to transform, to swell, to become something altogether new, something vibrant and unstoppable. With each new harp, a new door opened, a new avenue of sound explored. She'd put on an old Delta blues record, and instead of just mirroring the ache, she'd weave in the joyful, syncopated bounce of a Zydeco two-step, a defiant celebration amidst the lament. A Western swing tune would start, all fiddle and steel guitar, and her harp would answer with the passionate, soaring cry of a Klezmer clarinet, an unexpected twist that made the notes shimmer with a new kind of yearning.

She'd take a deep Cherokee chant, the steady pulse of the drum a foundation, and lay over it the intricate, almost frantic melody of a Celtic jig, finding the shared rhythm, the common pulse of ancient traditions. Then came the Mariachi trumpets, bold and bright, and her harp, with a newfound confidence, would engage in a playful call and response, a spirited dialogue. She'd put on some bluegrass, all lightning-fast pickin', and her harmonica would find a way to slide in, bending notes with the soulful improvisation of a bebop saxophonist, a surprising, daring foray.

It was a fusion, a wild, beautiful, untamed concoction. The walls of her small room seemed to expand, stretching to accommodate the sonic landscape she was creating. The music wasn't just sounds; it was stories, histories, whispered secrets from forgotten fields and bustling streets and ancient ceremonies. It was the resilience of the Acadian fiddler, the joyous defiance of the Tejano accordionist, the soulful wail of the Klezmer

trumpeter, the grounded power of the Native American drummer, all flowing through her, through those seven cheap little harps, through the six-toothed grin of Rabbit Punch.

The sun didn't just jiggle anymore; it danced, a fiery flamenco swirl. The clouds didn't just pause; they wove intricate patterns, a cosmic gospel choir singing its praises. And the Penobscot, oh, the Penobscot didn't just get pulled in; it became the very current of the sound, a swirling, ever-changing river of American music, all the ethno-American folk and jazz traditions you could imagine, bubbling up from the soul of Rabbit Punch, a woman who knew that sometimes, the most profound music came from the most unexpected places, played on the most unlikely instruments, by the most unforgettable hands. It was the sound of everything, all at once, and it was glorious.

The Pinto's Lament: A QUEST FOR ORSON`S SHADOW

By Pëllumb X. Prifti

The 1974 Ford Pinto idles at the corner of E 6th Street and Garey Avenue, its 2.3-liter engine coughing like a drunkard's laugh, the air thick with the tang of exhaust and the musk of Adult Bearded Dragon Trail Mix seeping from the trunk. Humboldt Jumbolia Newark IV, his head encircled by a bioluminescent dog bowl that pulses faintly green,

squints through the smudged windshield at the flickering streetlamp, its light casting jagged shadows that look like Orson Welles' mustache, a feature that once made him a figure of both awe and ridicule. The car's original interior—peeling vinyl, a single rearview mirror—smells of mothballs and the acrid bite of vaporwave playlist loops, the bass thumping like a heartbeat in the hollows of the Inland Empire's concrete veins. Duracell, the one-legged corgi-bearded dragon, gnaws on a pellet, his tail wagging in rhythm with the Pinto's engine, which roars like a disgruntled parrot, a sound that might've echoed through the streets of San Francisco in 1937 when Welles, penniless and clutching a script for Citizen Kane, first arrived, his father's funeral still a wound he couldn't stitch. The car's radio crackles: "...relics of auteur DNA... resurrect the director's vision..."

Humboldt's fingers trace the dents on the Pinto's door, each groove a scar from the 1970s, when the car was new and the world was a different kind of broken. He thinks of Welles in 1941, strutting through Hollywood with a cigarette dangling from his lip, his face lit by the neon of a diner on Sunset Boulevard, where he'd stay up all night writing Citizen Kane's script, his coffee cold, his mind a labyrinth of ambition and despair. The Pinto's engine coughs, and Humboldt wonders if Welles, in his final years, ever felt the same hollow ache, the same need to chase ghosts. The dog bowl's glow dims, and Humboldt remembers the 1950s, when Welles, broke and disillusioned, wandered Europe, filming Othello in Yugoslavia, his father's death still a wound he couldn't stitch. The Pinto's headlights cut through the dusk, and for a moment, the road seems to stretch into infinity, a metaphor for the life Welles never stopped trying to reinvent.

Kitty's voice cuts through the Vaporwave haze, her words sharp as the edge of a film reel. "We need a lead. The samples are somewhere—maybe in the old studio on 91st. You remember?" Humboldt nods, his eyes on the Laundromat across from 91st and Lemon, its windows smeared with detergent stains, the same kind of grime that clung to Welles' Touch of Evil set in 1957. The studio, once a hub for underground filmmakers, now houses a Laundromat where the scent of fabric softener mingles with the smell of old celluloid. Humboldt recalls the 1970s, when Welles, in Paris, would sip wine and speak of Falstaff, his voice a gravelly echo of the man who'd once commanded a radio audience

with a single line: “This is Orson Welles, and I’m here to tell you…” The Pinto’s engine roars, a sound like a thousand broken films splicing together, and Humboldt thinks of Welles’ 1938 radio play, the one that scared a nation, and how the fear it inspired was as much a product of the era as the script itself.

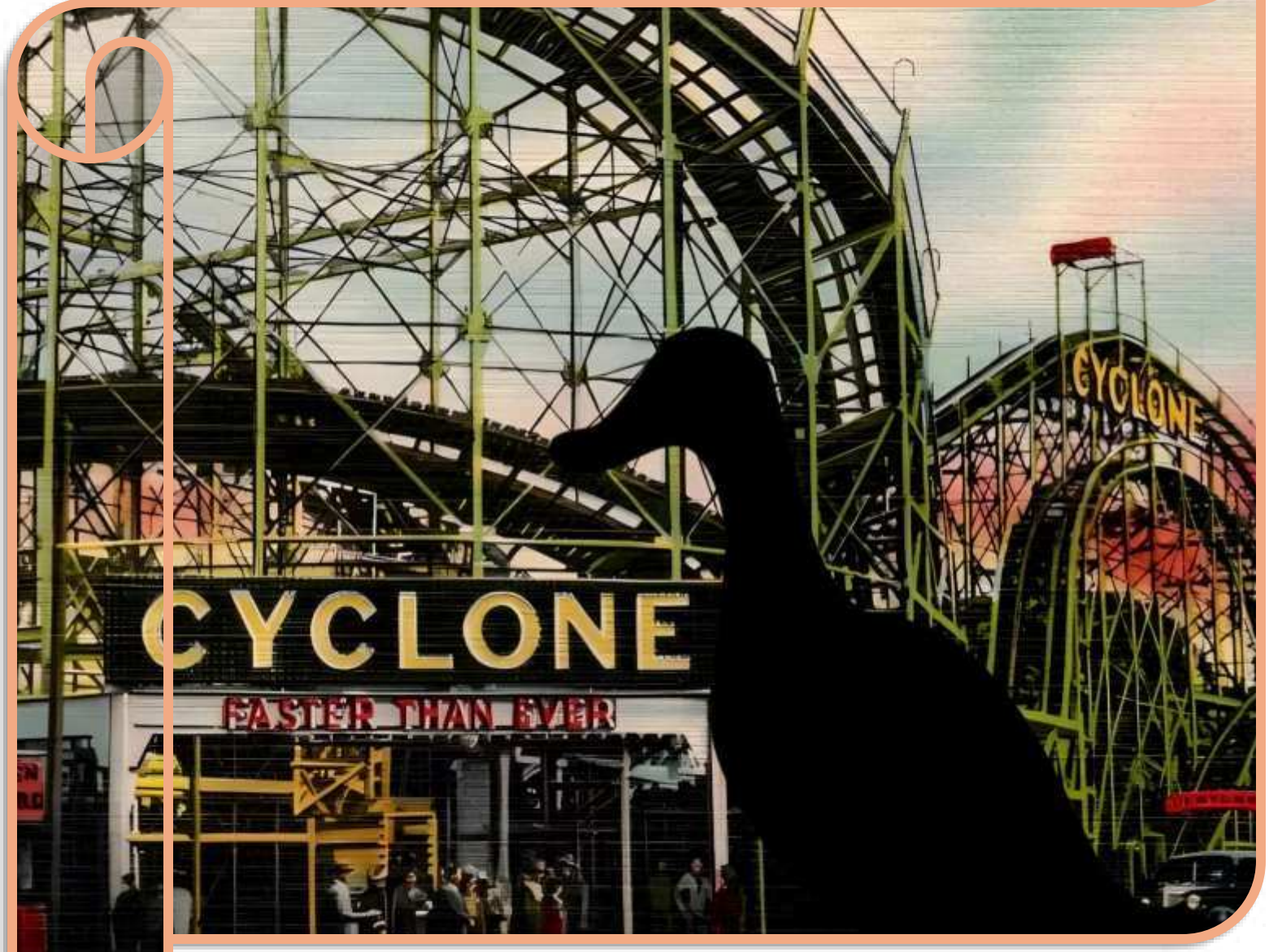
The trunk’s flashlight flickers, revealing a chaos of maps, pellets, and a yellowed envelope labeled “For the Directors’ Army.” Inside: a vial of dried saliva, a Polaroid of Welles mid-sneeze, and a scribbled note: “The lens is the weapon.” Humboldt’s hand trembles. “What if we’re not finding him?” Kitty whispers. “What if we’re becoming him?” The corgi leaps, knocking the bowl askew. It rolls into the footwell, its light dimming. Humboldt thinks of Welles’ final days, when he’d wander the streets of Los Angeles, a shadow of his former self, his hair gray, his eyes sharp as a blade. He’d once told a journalist, “I’m not a director. I’m a storyteller. And the story is always about power.” The Pinto’s engine dies, and the trunk’s flashlight dies with it. The silence is thick, like the air before a storm, and Humboldt hears the faintest whisper: “Rosebud.”

Duracell howls at a passing deer, the corgi-bird-thing leaping, knocking the bowl askew. The road ahead is a blur of asphalt and possibility. Humboldt thinks of Welles’ 1938 radio play, the one that scared a nation, and how the fear it inspired was as much a product of the era as the script itself. He imagines Welles, years later, in a dimly lit café in New York, sipping espresso and muttering about “the tyranny of the present,” his mind a mosaic of failed projects and unfulfilled dreams. The Pinto’s headlights cut through the dusk, and for a moment, the road seems to stretch into infinity, a metaphor for the life Welles never stopped trying to reinvent.

The Pinto stops. The engine dies. The bowl goes dark. Humboldt steps out, his boots crunching on gravel. The air smells of diesel and memory. Somewhere, a film reel skips. A door creaks open. The corgi’s tail wags. The screen fades to static. Humboldt thinks of Welles’ father’s funeral, how the young Orson had missed it, choosing instead to perform The War of the Worlds on October 30, 1938, a decision that would haunt him for the rest of his life. He wonders if the corgi, with its one leg and dragon soul, understands the weight of absence, the ache of a life lived in fragments. The road ahead

is a blur of asphalt and possibility, and Humboldt, like Welles before him, knows that the greatest stories are those that never end.

The story ends where it begins: a car, a bowl, a quest. The DNA? The auteur? The corgi? Let the reader's imagination burn. And remember: Welles once said, "The enemy of the artist is the artist himself." But maybe, just maybe, the enemy is also the ghost of a man who never stopped chasing his own shadow.


CYCLONE
FASTER THAN EVER
CYCLONE

Mallard Mayhem

on the Coney Island Cyclone

By Samuel Klemp

The gales of Coney Island, a wild, laughing shriek,
Tore at my surgeon's gown, as the roller coaster, quick,
Plunged down the Cyclone's maw, a drop that stole my breath,
While Baldwin, my dear duck, faced a perilous, blindfolded death.
His quacks, once filled with joy, now held a mournful plea,
As cricket-infused jelly pots warped reality for me.

The world spun, green and blurred, a kaleidoscope of fright,
Each twist a new delirium, in the fading Coney night.
My fingers, usually steady, now fumbled, slick and slow,

Seeking the feathered incision, where Baldwin's woes did grow.
Internal rhymes like whispers, through the roaring, wind-swept air,
As my makeshift operating theater swayed beyond compare.

A cry from the car behind, a mixture of awe and dread,
As I, with whispered prayers, moved swiftly, ahead.
The scalpel, then the clamp, a dance of danger, keen,
My mind, a hazy labyrinth, on this bizarre, chaotic scene.
The tracks beneath us rattled, a rhythm loud and deep,
While Baldwin's tiny heartbeat, a silent promise to keep.

Through the blur of the ride, I felt the organ's pull,
A tiny, inflamed appendix, demanding all my will.
The stitches, intricate, precise, despite the lurch and sway,
Each knot a desperate triumph, brightening the fading day.
And as the coaster slowed, with a final, jarring lurch,

Baldwin stirred, a soft "quack," from his emergency perch.

The blindfold off, my duckling blinked, his trusting eyes on mine,

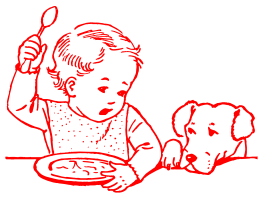
His appendectomy successful, a truly wondrous sign.

And though the jelly pots wore off, and clarity returned,

The legend of that surgery, in Coney Island, burned.

For who else could claim such valor, such a daring, feathered feat,

Than performing on Baldwin, mid-coaster, bittersweet?



PRINGLE'S LAMENT
A GONZO-NOUVEAU RECIPE FOR REALITY
ACTON
Pringles
Pringles

PRINGLE'S LAMENT:
A GONZO-NOUVEAU RECIPE FOR REALITY

By

Eliazer Birdwhistle

PART I: THE SECRET SAUCE (A RECIPE FOR ALCHEMICAL GONZO-NOUVEAU FICTION)

(See previous document for full methodology. This is an instantiation.)

PART II: SPECIMEN ZETA-42: PRINGLE'S LAMENT

LOCATION: Acton, California. (34.4492° N, 118.6088° W). A town perpetually bathed in the refracted glare of Hollywood's ambition, yet stubbornly clinging to the scent of orange groves and regret.

The father, Arthur Penhaligon – a man who appeared to be constructed entirely of elbows and knees, towering over everyone at 6'8" – sat opposite

his son, Miles. Miles, a compact 5'2", resembled a particularly thoughtful garden gnome. The living room door stood ajar, revealing a hallway that seemed to stretch into a non-Euclidean dimension. Arthur hadn't bothered to close it. Doors were suggestions, not barriers.

BREAKING NEWS: LOCAL MAN DISCOVERS HIS HOME IS A PORTAL TO THE FIFTH DIMENSION! EXPERTS BAFFLED!

"So," Arthur began, his voice a low rumble that vibrated the chipped Formica of the coffee table. "There's something I need to tell you. Something about... where you came from." He paused, adjusting his spectacles, which were perpetually sliding down his nose. The lenses were thick enough to refract light into miniature rainbows. The refractive index of borosilicate glass is approximately 1.47. The thought, unbidden, surfaced from the static of his mind.

Miles, already pale, turned a shade reminiscent of unbleached muslin. He didn't speak. He didn't move. He simply existed, a small, still point in a universe of escalating chaos.

TIPS FROM TEEN DREAM MAGAZINE: IS YOUR DAD ACTING WEIRD? HE MIGHT BE HIDING A COSMIC SECRET!

Dear Crushed by Reality, my dad just told me I was adopted from a carnival! What do I do? Should I change my aesthetic?

Crushed, honey, that's a lot! First, breathe. Second, maybe it's time for a bold new haircut! And remember, you're the main character in your story, no

matter where you came from. Try journaling about your feelings – and maybe avoid any suspiciously antique popcorn machines.

"I... I wasn't your biological father." The words felt like gravel tumbling down a metal chute. "You were adopted. A long time ago. From... well, from a traveling carnival."

The carnival. It wasn't just a carnival. It was "Professor Eldridge's Cabinet of Curiosities and Astonishing Anomalies," a mobile menagerie of the bizarre and the broken. Arthur had been a young, aspiring accountant then, lured by the promise of steady work auditing the carnival's notoriously opaque finances. He'd found more than just discrepancies in the books. He'd found a baby, left in a bassinet constructed from a repurposed popcorn machine. The baby, Miles.

UFO WATCH EXCLUSIVE: WAS YOUR BABY ABDUCTED BY CARNIVAL ALIENS? THE TRUTH THEY DON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW!

The story spiraled. The carnival's owner, Professor Eldridge, a man rumored to be 147 years old and powered by a diet of pickled onions and regret. The fortune teller, Madame Evangeline, who predicted Arthur's life would be "a series of escalating inconveniences." The strongman, Boris, who could bend steel with his mind (or possibly just had incredibly dense muscles). The two-headed goat, Bartholomew and Beatrice, who had a surprisingly sophisticated

understanding of existential philosophy. And the missing mother. A trapeze artist named Seraphina, who vanished during a performance, leaving behind only a single sequined glove and a lingering scent of ozone. Ozone (O3) is an allotrope of oxygen with a relatively unstable molecular structure.

Miles' eyes began to glisten. A single tear traced a path down his cheek, leaving a faint, shimmering trail.

"Did you want something, Dad?"

The voice, sharp and impatient, sliced through the narrative like a scalpel. It belonged to Kevin, Arthur's other son, a man of average height (5'10") and boundless entitlement, who was currently engrossed in a competitive online game involving virtual livestock.

WOMAN'S SECRET MAGAZINE: 7 WAYS TO HANDLE INTERRUPTED EMOTIONAL CONFESSIONS! (HINT: IT INVOLVES SNACKS!)

Ask Dr. Lovejoy: My husband keeps trying to reveal deep family secrets, but our son keeps interrupting him with his video games! What's the secret to a connected family?

Dr. Lovejoy says: Oh, dear! Communication is key, but so is timing! Try scheduling "Sacred Story Time" away from distractions. Maybe offer a reward for uninterrupted listening – a new virtual farm animal for your son, perhaps?

And don't forget, a little patience and a lot of love can overcome even the most fractured timelines!

Arthur snapped his fingers. “Darn it! Now I have to start all over again! You need to be in the room when I’m destroying your world!” He ran a hand through his already disheveled hair. The weight of untold stories, of fractured timelines, pressed down on him.

Meanwhile, eighty-nine-year-old Beatrice Bellweather, formerly “Bunny LaRue” – star of such cinematic masterpieces as “Attack of the Giant Space Squids” and “The Brain Eaters from Planet X” – was cruising down Highway 14 in her 1978 Cadillac Eldorado, a vehicle that smelled perpetually of mothballs and ambition. She was on her way to the Flying J Truck Stop near Palmdale.

SHOCKING REVELATION: FORMER SCREAM QUEEN NOW CHASES TORNADOES! IS THIS THE APOCALYPSE OR JUST A REALLY GOOD PUBLICIST?

Beatrice, despite her age, possessed the energy of a hummingbird on amphetamines. She wore a leopard-print jumpsuit, oversized sunglasses, and a headset connected to a CB radio and a shortwave receiver. She chased tornadoes for fun. She considered them “nature’s performance art.”

“Breaker, breaker, good buddy,” she crackled into the CB. “Bunny LaRue here, comin’ at ya from the high desert. Anyone seein’ any green skies?”

She pulled into the truck stop, the Eldorado dwarfing the surrounding eighteen-wheelers. She parked haphazardly, leaving a generous gap between herself and a tanker truck carrying industrial lubricant. She was here for the doughnuts. And the conversation. The truck stop was her salon, her confessional, her source of unfiltered truth.

She spotted him immediately. Old Man Tiberius, leaning against a stack of Pringles crates, looking... different. Tiberius, her former dance partner from the chorus line of “The Brain Eaters from Planet X.” He’d been a lanky, awkward fellow back then, prone to tripping over his own feet. Now, he was... enormous. A towering figure in a Pringles uniform, his face obscured by a baseball cap.

“Tiberius?” Beatrice called out, her voice surprisingly strong for a woman of her age.

He turned, slowly. His eyes, when they met hers, were filled with a profound sadness.

“Bunny?” he rasped, his voice gravelly and unfamiliar. “Is that really you?”

“The one and only. What in the Sam Hill are you doing driving a Pringles truck?”

CONSPIRACY THEORIST'S CORNER: ARE PRINGLES CONTROLLING YOUR MIND? THE SHOCKING TRUTH ABOUT YOUR FAVORITE SNACK!

Host: Welcome back to "Unseen Signals," where we expose the hidden agendas behind everyday objects. Tonight, we ask: Is that crunch you hear the sound of freedom, or the whispered commands of a global snack cartel?

Sources deep within the potato chip industry reveal disturbing connections between Pringles, weather manipulation, and mind control. Coincidence? Or the most delicious conspiracy ever concocted? You decide!

Tiberius sighed, a sound like air escaping a punctured tire. “It’s a long story. It involves a failed investment in alpaca farming, a regrettable incident with a mime, and a desperate need for dental insurance.” He paused. “And the Pringles. They... they watch you, Bunny. They know things. They know about the squids.”

He began to explain. The Pringles trucks weren’t just delivering potato chips. They were collecting data. Monitoring atmospheric anomalies. Tracking the movements of rogue weather patterns. The chips themselves were encoded with subliminal messages, designed to influence consumer behavior and maintain the delicate balance of the global snack food ecosystem. The Maillard reaction, responsible for the characteristic flavor of Pringles, is a chemical reaction between amino acids and reducing sugars...

Beatrice listened, fascinated and horrified. She’d faced giant space squids and brain-eating aliens, but this... this was something else entirely.

“And the alpaca?” she asked, finally.

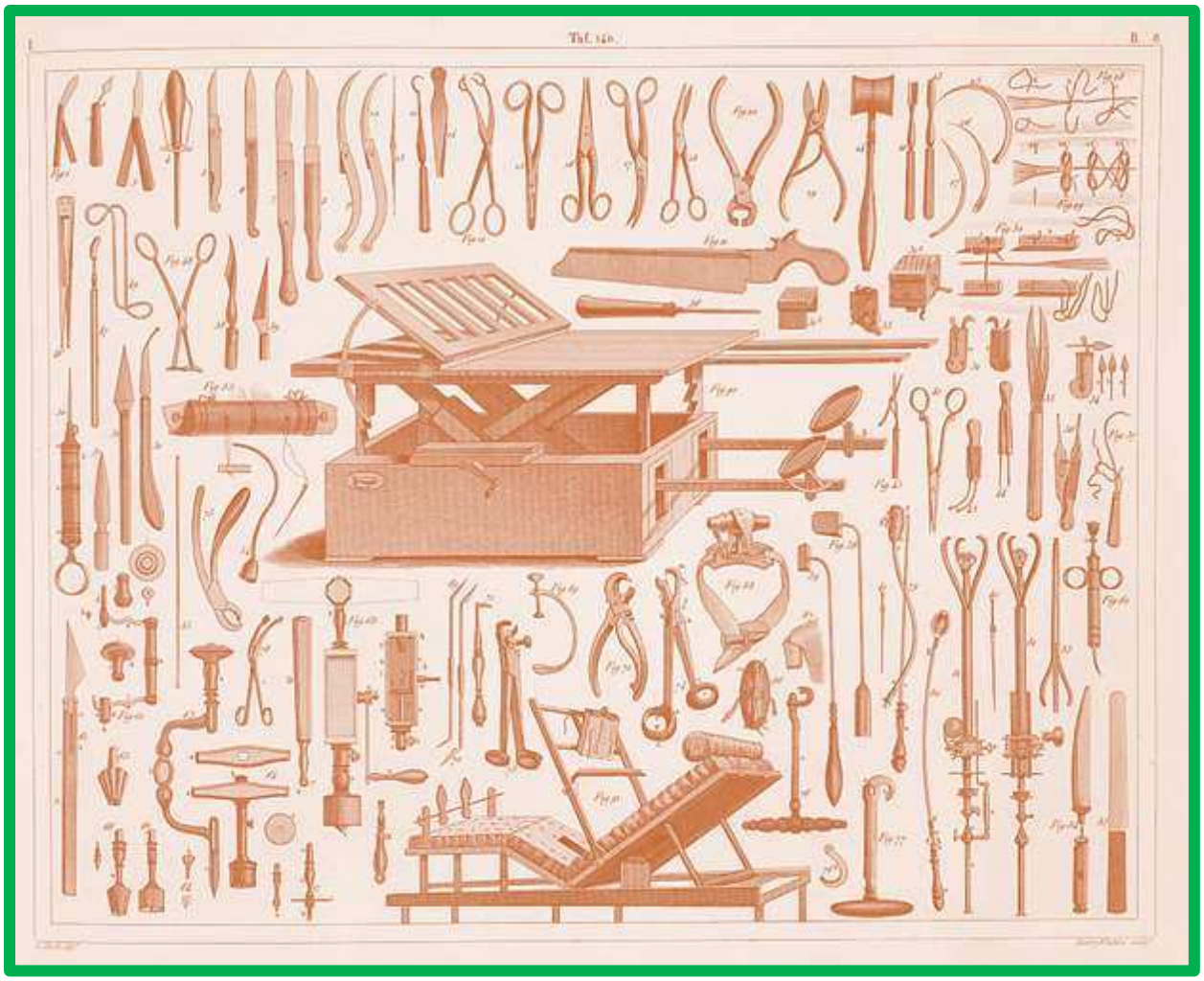
“Don’t even get me started on the alpaca.” Tiberius shook his head, a gesture that sent a ripple through the stack of Pringles crates. “They were... judgmental.”

A sudden gust of wind rattled the windows of the truck stop. Beatrice glanced out. A swirling vortex of dust and debris was forming on the horizon. A tornado.

“Well, Tiberius,” she said, a mischievous glint in her eye. “Looks like we’ve got work to do.” She grabbed a box of glazed doughnuts and headed for the Eldorado, the CB radio crackling with static and the promise of adventure. The Pringles truck, a silent, watchful sentinel, remained parked in the lot, its cargo of encoded potato chips a testament to the strange, unsettling reality of Acton, California.

[1]The kitchen, in its entirety, was a closed system, albeit one constantly receiving inputs of energy and matter. Its entropy, however, was steadily increasing, mirroring the inevitable decay of all things. And the toast was getting cold.

[2]Meanwhile, a rabid smoked ham and cheese sandwich, believed to be the escaped culinary masterpiece of a renegade deli artist, was observed brainwashing feral chickens on a neglected stretch of the I-5 freeway in Los Angeles. Using a highly corrosive blend of mayonnaise and existential dread, the sandwich had coerced the feathered flock into forming a synchronized tambourine orchestra, busking for spare change from bewildered commuters. Reports indicate their rendition of "Bohemian Rhapsody" was surprisingly accurate, if a little clucky.



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